

The Next Step

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PHIL 104: Cultural Diversity

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Asad Haider's take on "insurgent universality" is not only nuanced, but should be the next step taken in the process of identifying and liberating ourselves. America is watched by every other country in the world. The human rights struggle that has been taking place since the birth of this country (and far before the birth) has been watched and has inspired many other nations to look internally and fear a revolution if not every person in their population is seen as an equal. The only way for that to truly take place is to not shift/switch places or positions on the structural ladder, but to make a new structure that has no one below or above anybody, where things are completely fair. That is why taking the next step of ditching the falsities believed about race and advocating not only for ourselves, but also for others as if we are the ones facing that injustice, is so important.

I am *enamored* with the history of America. But when learning *specifically* about African-Americans and their experience, when told by our current education system, things end up turning into a pity party. What has always bothered me, is how in depth the negatives are studied without much of anything else that is positive. Black people, I feel, are worth being studied beyond the dehumanization and humiliation that we endured throughout our time here in America; People getting blown down with waterhoses, lynching, refusal of service and suffrage. These things are quite infuriating to think about, and when given no other view of experience or narrative, it is depressing. And the internalizing of these things, I do not think makes things easier but harder for me to perform as a student or as a person. Learning about them is good, all history should be learned. But to suggest that those atrocities are *solely who I am* (which is what the system of education does when it glosses and skims over anything *but* slavery and civil rights in a classroom), is in a way not fair, because that's not the full picture.

Asad Haider, author of *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* quoted Robin D. G. Kelley saying

Reading black experience through trauma can easily slip into thinking of ourselves as victims and objects rather than agents, subjected to centuries of gratuitous violence that have structured and overdetermined our very being.¹

And as far as my experience of learning has been concerned, black people are only talked about when we are being kicked around and now, here comes our story of not even making it stop, but just making it less harsh. The whole process of having to ask for rights from the gracious “man” is demeaning (albeit being necessary at the time), & I have ALWAYS felt this way, but I do understand that those who wrote the constitution of this country *explicitly* fleshed out my limitations and experience, declaring those who are slaves are to be worth 3/5ths of what a regular citizen is worth. So we had to “do what we had to do”. Someone of Jewish descent can also trace their history back to persecution and genocide, yet what gives them power and motivation (I assume) is a traditional and close knit culture that highlights *everything* that they have went through, not just the holocaust, but the *good* and the bad. However, the answer to this problem of “oppression” is not to teach the negative and positive parts about African American experience and to just stop there. *It is to educate every student in the classroom the flaw of dividing ourselves and believing in this division.* The flaw of believing that black, whites, asians, and hispanics are different. That black people are

¹Asad Haider, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (London: Verso, 2018), 38.

super rebellious when placed under oppression and THAT'S it. Like we were just dropped here on earth to fight against people who don't like us and that's all we do, or did, while living here (in America) for 400 years. We were also able to achieve scientific discoveries and pursue happiness *in spite* of those atrocities. These problems arrived because everybody was foolish enough to believe that we are different in the first place, capitalism in the 1600's taking advantage of that, so that they can enforce slavery and have it only be a "black" problem. It's an "everybody" problem because if I am vulnerable to slavery and discrimination, then anyone who has the same situation as I (in terms of power and economics) is susceptible to it too, and it is bound to happen to them as well, if someone can gain from it.

Asad Haider lays out in his book how instead of dividing ourselves and identifying with a "race", when the whole concept of race is in fact NOT substantial or concrete but a mere social *construction*, we can instead see ourselves as one and if injustice happens to someone who looks different than me, to take that as an injustice to me, myself, because honestly it is. If a system allows anyone to be taken advantage of, then who's to say that next time, it won't be you? It is not that people love taking advantage of black people, because the Irish and Jewish or whoever was the minority, was looked down upon and treated unfairly as well, the bigger picture to be seen here is that those who do not have *POWER, or wealth* are treated terribly and given an unfair piece of the pie. In South Africa, Europeans are the minority, so why in a country with majority black people are they on the top of the scale (Europeans) when it comes to treatment? Because of money, property, and power. Asad Haider goes further into saying how race was constructed the way it is to be now because of class. The bourgeoisie (wealthy elite), deliberately separates the proletariat (working class, who is

infinitely larger in number) in whatever way that they can (with race) so that they are too busy fighting amongst themselves to strip the elites of wealth and power and reallocate it back to the majority.

No other group, movement or force in capitalist society is remotely capable of mounting as effective and formidable a challenge to the existing structures of power and privilege as it is in the power of organized labor to mount.²

The proletariat (working class) is the majority, and they are filled with every type of person that you can think of, white, black, brown, “you name it”. So if the bourgeoisie can not find a way to divide and manipulate their biggest threat, then they are in trouble of being told, by force, to share their wealth with the majority (the working class).

Race became very important when Americans in the mid 1600’s started to forcibly bring slaves over here to America to work for them as opposed to using indentured European slaves (who were still exploited brutally, however they at least had some sort of laws protecting their humanity, while Africans when brought and brung over here, did not). The “white race” identity was created to promise the poor whites, who had just as much economically as the blacks, that as long as they did not see themselves as the same as black people, and as long as they promised not to join together with black folks and demand change from the exhausting and harsh conditions that the entirety of the working class suffered from, then they would have few and slight privileges, what is labeled today now as “white privileges”. As long as they promised not

²Asad Haider, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (London: Verso, 2018), 95.

to think bigger than capitalism. In exchange for identifying with the “white race”, Asad Haider quotes W.E.B. Du Bois book “The Black Reconstruction” laying out how

They were given public deference and title of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent on their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown to them.³

This kept the ongoing mistreatment and slavery of blacks at the time “safe” and it most definitely kept the system of capitalism that thrives on such oppression “safer” and more hidden. This specific social construct (race) is something that fools *especially* the common man, who has virtually nothing unless he sells himself into the system of labor slavery owned by others that lasts until his old age, into seeking comfort from those who biologically look like him instead of the bigger family of people who economically *starve like him*. The working class had to be kept divided at all costs! The population of America in the 1600’s was mostly black and white, yet it was the top 1% (only a select few whites) who benefitted from white *and* black labor.

³ W. E. B. Du Bois, and David Levering Lewis, *Black Reconstruction in America*, The Free Press, 1998.

The insurrectionary alliance of European and African laborers was a fundamental existential threat to the colonial ruling class, and the possibility of such an alliance among exploited peoples had to be prevented forever.⁴

In this statement, Asad Haider points out the power structure that was not only prevalent in the 1600's but one that remains the same today. If people were to stop seeing themselves as different from each other, then they would be able to more easily come together and *create the system to replace the system* today that we use, that has people on top and others at the bottom (which for our society is capitalism; the ownership of the means of production by a few elite, while those who work tirelessly to create those "means" receive a fraction of what it's worth back in wages). One might say "Well that is unimaginable", and I would say that it is not. Surely, it is tough to conceive of, but beyond just discussing it right here in this assignment, it can be done, it just must be made a vocal, possible, popular, essential, and clear concept familiar to far more people than those in the circles of academia & socialist thought (the practice of dissociating identity with race and gaining *class* consciousness, which would inevitably lead to even further discussion on the issues of capitalism). Because quite obviously for our (America's) sake and every other country who watches and follows after our lead..

"the sooner, the better."

⁴Asad Haider, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (London: Verso, 2018), 55.

Bibliography

Du Bois, W. E. B., and David Levering Lewis. *Black Reconstruction in America*.

The Free Press, 1998.

Haider, Asad. *Mistaken identity: Race and class in the age of trump*. London: Verso, 2018.

Minimal Requirements (significant deductions for noncompliance)						
1	File submitted as a single PDF file.				TRUE	
2	File submitted on time.				TRUE	
3	Turnitin similarity report below 20%.				TRUE	
4	Word count below maximum (excluding title page, footnotes, &c.)				TRUE	
5	Thesis directly addresses main question of assignment.				TRUE	
					Deduction:	0.00%
		Percent	Weight	Weighted		
Creative Title (first impression before reading content of essay)						
1	Title strikes interest.	75%	0.83%	0.63%		
2	Title eloquently phrased.	75%	0.83%	0.63%		
3	Title describes content seemingly appropriate to assignment prompt.	60%	0.83%	0.50%		
		70.00%	2.50%	1.75%		
Chicago Manual of Style, Note Bibliography (NB) Conventions						
Font						
1	Standard, legible font.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
2	Font size.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
3	Consistent throughout, including page numbers and footnotes.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
Title Page						
4	Title centered on a separate title page.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
5	Title in title case.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
6	Title grammatically correct.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
7	Title one-third of the way down the page.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
8	Name, class information, and date several lines after title.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
9	Name, class information, and date centered.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
10	Name, class information, and date accurate.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
Main Body						
11	Double spaced.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
12	Minimum of one inch margins.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
13	Margins balanced.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
14	Paragraphs aligned left, or justified.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
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24	Appears as last section of paper.	100%		0.07%	0.07%	
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26	Two blank lines after label.	0%		0.07%	0.00%	
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Footnotes						
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2	Capitalization.	60%		0.50%	0.30%	
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5	Sentence structure.	60%		0.50%	0.30%	
		76.00%	2.50%	1.90%		
Use, Description & Citation of Sources						
1	Assigned works quoted the assigned number of times.	100.00%		0.50%	0.50%	
2	Titles of sources mentioned in headline style where academically appropriate.	100.00%		0.50%	0.50%	
3	Historical-philosophical relevance of sources described academically.	60.00%		0.50%	0.30%	
4	Footnote citation of sources where needed.	100.00%		0.50%	0.50%	
5	Footnote citations accurate and complete.	85.00%		0.50%	0.43%	
		89.00%	2.50%	2.23%		
Creative Rhetorical Style						
1	Creative, elegant, personal, non-generic word choice.	100%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	
2	Creative, elegant, personal, non-generic sentence structure.	100%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	
3	Creative narrative flow.	100%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	
4	Thematic focus on a central problem or question.	100%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	
5	Elegant paragraph breaks.	100%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	
6	Elegant incorporation of quotes.	75%	1.00%	0.75%		
7	Elegant integration of Chicago style.	85%	1.00%	0.85%		
8	Phrasing of the title creatively integrated.	85%	1.00%	0.85%		
9	Concluding paragraph creatively emphasizes main thesis.	100%	1.00%	1.00%		
10	Final sentence makes a lasting impact.	100%	1.00%	1.00%		
		94.50%	10.00%	9.45%		
Engagement with Assigned Works						
1	Intellectually curious engagement with the assignment, and assigned works.	100%	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%	
		100.00%	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%	
Ordinary Language						
1	Ordinary language of students, rooted in everyday talk, primarily used.	100%	3.75%	3.75%	3.75%	
2	Problematic philosophical context explained in ordinary language.	100%	3.75%	3.75%	3.75%	
3	Quotes characterized and explained in ordinary language.	100%	3.75%	3.75%	3.75%	
4	Philosophical relevance of sources explained in ordinary language.	60%	3.75%	2.25%		
5	Conceptual difficulties explored in ordinary language.	100%	3.75%	3.75%		
6	Relatable examples given in ordinary language.	75%	3.75%	2.81%		
7	Jargon defined and explained in ordinary language.	75%	3.75%	2.81%		
8	Erudite vocabulary paraphrased and integrated within ordinary language.	100%	3.75%	3.75%		
		88.75%	30.00%	26.63%		
COGENCY (Critical Thinking)						
1	Thesis definitively stated (THESIS).	100%	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%	
2	Appropriate, factually accurate evidence (EVIDENCE).	85%	12.00%	10.20%		
3	Strong logical structure (STRENGTH).	75%	24.00%	18.00%		
		80.50%	40.00%	32.20%		
			Totals:	100.00%	86.13%	

